

Action Item

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*To be completed by NASDA Staff:***Date Submitted:** September 8, 2011**Committee:** Rural Development and Financial Security☒ Recommended by Committee☐ Recommended with Amendment by Committee☐ Not Recommended by Committee☒ Adopted by NASDA☐ Adopted with Amendment by NASDA☐ Not Adopted by NASDA**Additional Notes:****Subject of Action Item:**

Forage Supply and Assistance

Submitted By:

Commissioner Todd Staples, Texas Department of Agriculture

Text of Action Item:

NASDA members and staff should work collectively, across the nation and in their respective states, to assist farmers and ranchers impacted by natural disasters in accessing hay by assisting in the coordination of forage distribution and working to temporarily ease hauling and transportation restrictions to support the efficient movement of forage to areas of significant need.

Background & Rationale:

States across the nation have been ravaged by droughts, wildfires and other natural disasters. Current conditions have left ranchers desperately searching for forage to feed their livestock and maintain their herds.

To assist ranchers who are in need of hay, state departments of agriculture can facilitate the buying and selling of hay among agricultural producers by connecting buyers with sellers and shippers. Specifically, state departments of agriculture for states with abundant hay supplies could assist their hay producers by encouraging them to self-list on hay networks in states with hay shortages. For example, hay sellers from across the U.S. can self-list on the Texas hay hotline by logging onto www.TexasAgriculture.gov/hayhotline.

Additionally, state's can facilitate the distribution of hay by temporarily easing transportation/hauling restrictions. Below is sample language for NASDA members to send in a letter to their respective transportation regulatory authorities:

September X, 2011

Dear (appropriate authority):

With historic drought conditions in Texas and parts of the southwestern United States, I request you review the appropriate rules within our state to ensure on a temporary basis that hay transporters can haul hay shipments of at least 12-feet wide and 14-feet high on highways throughout the state without special permitting. This may require the issuance of a temporary blanket waiver to suspend permitting requirements for round hay bales and associated permitting fees for carriers transporting oversized loads of hay.

The suspension of permitting requirements for transporting hay will be instrumental in assisting livestock producers throughout the country to efficiently acquire and transport hay they desperately need to continue

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operating until conditions improve. This will also aid our state's hay producers in getting their product to this important market.

Thank you for your work on behalf of agriculture and on-going attention to drought and wildfire issues. Please contact me if I may provide additional information or assistance with the request.

Sincerely,

Leadership from state agricultural departments will be vital in communicating hay and transportation needs to farmers and ranchers, as well as transportation officials in their states. NASDA staff can also play an important role in coordinating these efforts in a timely and effective manner.